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LETTER DATED 30 JUNE 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I wish to refer to the letters dated 24 June (A/53/1010-S/1999/714) and 25 June 1999 (S/1999/720) addressed to you from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon.

Unfortunately, it comes as no surprise that the Permanent Representative of Lebanon has presented the Secretary-General with only a very selective and one-sided account of the recent events, which pointedly disregards the acts of terror which precipitated the Israeli response cited. Such acts of terror were conducted by the Hizballah terrorist group from within Lebanese territory against Israeli civilians and territory, with the support and active encouragement of the Lebanese Government.

First, on 5 May both at 5.55 a.m. and again at 5.55 p.m., Hizballah fired on civilian areas in the Western Galilee, forcing citizens to take refuge in bomb shelters, yet still wounding one civilian. Next, on the night of Israel's Election Day, 17 May, when Israelis were gathered near their homes to participate in the election process, Hizballah struck the densely populated town of Kiryat Shemona with a barrage of Katyusha rockets. Again on 20 June, Hizballah attacked civilian areas deep in the Western Galilee, raining 122-millimetre mortar rounds on homes and buildings, and forcing hundreds of Israeli civilians to seek protection in bomb shelters.

In an attempt to exercise maximum restraint, Israel appealed to the Monitoring Group established by the 26 April 1996 Understanding, in the hope that Lebanon and its terrorist group Hizballah would honour commitments established by the Understanding and refrain from further attacks.

It was only after Hizballah continued to attack last week that Israel finally opted to respond. Following a Hizballah attack on civilian areas in the Western Galilee on 24 May, Israel had no choice but to take preventive action against the State-sponsored terrorism emanating from Lebanon. The attacks on northern Israel resulted in the death of two civilians and serious injuries to several others, as well as extensive damage to property.

Far from renouncing acts of terrorism, the Government of Lebanon wholeheartedly endorses them. Indeed, in an interview with An-Nahar printed on

28 June 1999, President Emile Lahoud of Lebanon stated that the recent terrorist attack had the full and complete support of the Lebanese Government, including the firing of Katyusha rockets into "occupied Palestinian lands". The President added that "the Lebanese army and the resistance are part of the Lebanese people, within the framework of national unity".

Such statements are a chilling indication that not only is the Lebanese Government not prepared to comply with its fundamental responsibility to prevent acts of terrorism from within its territory, but it has gone as far as to adopt and even embrace the terrorists themselves.

Thus it is indeed ironic that the Permanent Representative of Lebanon seeks, in his above-mentioned letters, to invoke principles such as sovereignty and independence, the Charter of the United Nations, rules of international law and human rights, etc., when Lebanon itself - in actively sponsoring, encouraging and acquiescing to the terrorist activities of Hizballah - is effectively carrying out State-sponsored terrorism, in stark violation of all the principles it cites.

Israel once again calls on the Government of Lebanon to cease its support for, and acquiescence in, cross-border terrorism - a policy guaranteed only to escalate the tragic loss of civilian life. Israel invites Lebanon to return to the negotiating table, so as to resolve the conflict and restore peace and security to our common border.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dore GOLD
Ambassador
Permanent Representative